

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SSB 6455

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Expanding the professional educator workforce by increasing career opportunities in education, creating a more robust enrollment forecasting, and enhancing recruitment efforts.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Dammeier, Rolfes, Litzow, Billig, Rivers, Conway and McAuliffe).

Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on Education

House Committee on Appropriations

Background: The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Association of School Principals conducted a statewide survey in fall of 2015 and found that principals are struggling to hire qualified teachers and substitutes. The feedback showed a particular shortage of teachers in areas that are typically difficult to fill, such as special education, mathematics, and science.

Of the principals who responded, 45 percent said they were unable to fill all teacher positions this school year with certificated instructional staff who met the job qualifications. In addition, 54 percent said they were often unable to find enough substitutes.

Recruitment Campaign. In 2015, the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) released a report of recommendations for addressing the current teacher shortage. The report highlighted several areas of improvement for reducing teacher attrition in Washington, including assisting school districts with the hiring of new teachers. In addition, the report notes the need for a more robust recruitment campaign geared at encouraging young people to enter the teaching profession and attracting out-of-state teachers to positions in Washington public schools.

Professional Certification for Experienced Out-of-state Teachers. PESB is a 13-member board responsible for establishing the requirements for the state certification of educators and approving educator preparation and certification programs.

Current law requires passage of a Washington Educator Skills Test Basic (WEST-B) for admission to approved teacher preparation programs and for persons from out-of-state applying for a Washington teaching certificate. The WEST-B contains three sub-tests that

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measure basic skills in reading, mathematics, and writing. Passage of all three sub-tests is required to meet the WEST-B requirement.

Retired Teachers. The normal retirement age for members of Plans 2 and 3 of the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) is age 65. TRS Plan 2 members with 20 years of service and TRS Plan 3 members with 10 years of service can retire as early as age 55. Benefits paid to persons who retire early from TRS Plans 2 or 3 with less than 30 years of service are calculated using early retirement factors that provide a full actuarial reduction based on the number of years between the retirement age and age 65. For example, there is a 27 percent reduction of benefits for retirement at age 62 and a 41 percent reduction of benefits for retirement at age 60.

Two early retirement factor options are available to TRS Plan 2 and 3 members who retire with 30 or more years of service. One of the options was created in 2000 and reduces benefits by 3 percent for each year in the period between the retirement age and age 65. For example, there is a 9 percent reduction of benefits for retirement at age 62 and a 15 percent reduction of benefits for retirement at age 60. The other option that provides smaller benefit reductions was implemented in 2008 as a replacement for gain-sharing benefits. Under the 2008 early retirement factors, TRS Plan 2 and 3 members with 30 years of service may retire at age 62 with no reduction of benefits and at age 60 with a 5 percent reduction.

State law does not prohibit persons who retire from TRS Plans 2 or 3 from returning to work, but it does limit when a retiree may work and continue receiving pension payments. In general, payments are suspended when a TRS retiree works more than 867 hours per year in a position included in TRS or another state retirement plan. However, payments are suspended immediately if a TRS Plan 2 or 3 retiree who retired using the 2008 early retirement factors returns to work in any kind of position with a state retirement plan prior to age 65. This includes returning to work as a substitute teacher.

Conditional Scholarship Program. The Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification and Educator Retooling programs are designed to help school districts recruit teachers in subject matter and geographic areas with a teacher shortage. Conditional scholarships are available to qualifying participants wishing to participate in either program. In return for the conditional scholarship, participants agree to teach in specified subject shortage areas in Washington K-12 public schools.

PESB determines the shortage areas and selects the recipients. The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) administers the program. Typical shortage areas include bilingual education, computer science education, English language learner, mathematics, science, and special education.

The loan amount for the Alternative Route program is currently \$8,000 per year. The state will forgive one year of loan obligation for every two years a loan recipient teaches in a Washington State public school. The Educator Retooling Conditional Scholarship Program provides financial support - scholarships up to \$3,000 - to Washington certified teachers who seek to add an endorsement in a subject or geographic shortage area.

Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST). The BEST program provides professional development and mentor support for beginning educators and educators on probation. OSPI administers grant funding for the BEST program. The BEST program includes professional development for beginning educators and mentors, release time for beginning educators and mentors to work together, orientation or individualized assistance before the start of the school year, and program evaluation.

Basic Skills and Content Tests for Teacher Certification. To obtain a teaching certificate in Washington, candidates must pass a basic skills test that includes reading, writing, and mathematics. Most teacher preparation programs require passage of the basic skills test prior to admittance. In addition to the basic skills test, a candidate must also pass a content test that identifies the subject matter and grade levels that they are authorized to teach. Each new teaching certificate must include at least one subject matter, also known as an endorsement. Passage of both tests is required prior to applying for a certification with OSPI.

Basic skills test fees range from \$155 to \$225, and content knowledge test fees range from \$95 to \$155. Test takers must also pay a \$35 registration fee.

Tuition Waivers. Tuition waivers provided by public institutions of higher education fall into one of three categories: state-supported, discretionary, and space available.

For state-supported waivers only, it has been assumed that tuition not collected from students to whom the waivers are granted is offset by state funding in the institutions' budgets. These waivers are subject to caps on the maximum percentages of gross operating fee revenue that each institution or sector can waive. A few mandatory waivers exist in state statute concerning the children and spouses of veterans and law enforcement officers who became totally disabled or lost their lives in the line of duty.

Public institutions have the authority to waive tuition to any undergraduate or graduate student for any purpose. These discretionary waivers are not subject to caps, but none of the foregone tuition revenue is made up by the state.

Under current law, public institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of the tuition and services and activities fees for state employees, teachers, and certain certificated instructional staff. However, the following conditions exist: these students must register for and be enrolled in courses on a space-available basis; enrollment information must be maintained separate from official enrollment reports; and a registration fee is required.

Summary: Teacher Recruitment. Subject to appropriation, OSPI, in partnership with educational service districts and school districts, must develop and implement a comprehensive, statewide initiative to increase the number of qualified individuals who apply for teaching positions in Washington.

The recruitment initiative activities include:

- implementing a recruitment campaign that targets individuals with certificates who are not employed as teachers, undergraduate college students who have not chosen a major, out-of-state teachers, military personnel and their spouses, and other groups of individuals who may be interested in teaching in our public schools;

- developing, in partnership with the Employment Security Department, a central web-based depository that allows teachers to apply for jobs in multiple school districts, and school districts to have access to a broader pool of applicants, with priority to smaller school districts;
- creating or enhancing an existing website that provides job-related information to individuals who are interested in teaching in Washington; and
- taking other actions to increase the number of qualified individuals who apply for teaching positions in Washington.

OSPI must assess the efficiency of the web-based application depository, after soliciting feedback from small districts. By December 1, 2019, OSPI must report to the Legislature on whether the requirement for the application depository be continued, modified, or terminated.

Subject to a specific appropriation, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, in collaboration with PESB, must work with appropriate public agencies, school districts and educational service districts, and other parties to disseminate information designed to increase recruitment into teacher preparation programs. The information must be disseminated statewide using existing channels.

Subject to a specific appropriation, PESB must create and administer the Recruitment Specialists Grant program to provide funds to PESB-approved teacher preparation programs to hire, or contract with, recruitment specialists that focus on recruitment of individuals who are from a traditionally underrepresented group among teachers in Washington when compared to the common school population.

Professional Certification for Out-of-State Teachers. PESB must develop a method to compare the rigor of the Washington professional certificate process with the advanced level teacher certification process of other states, and with United States federal or state teacher certification processes that allow individuals to teach internationally.

Out-of-state teachers with at least five years of successful teaching experience must be given the state professional certificate if they have:

- a certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards;
- an advanced level teaching certificate from another state that is determined to be comparable to the Washington professional certificate; or
- a United States federally issued or state-issued advanced level teacher certificate that allows the individual to teach internationally that has been determined to be comparable to the Washington professional certificate.

By September 1, 2020, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy must review the effect of the out-of-state teacher professional certification provisions and report to the Legislature, with information on:

- the extent to which advanced level teacher certificates from other states compare to the Washington professional certificate;
- the extent to which United States federal or state-issued advanced level teacher certificates that allow individuals to teach internationally compare to the Washington professional certificate; and

- whether these provisions have increased the number of professional certifications issued to individuals from out-of-state.

Retired Teachers. Until August 1, 2020, certain teachers who have retired under the alternate early retirement provisions may be employed without a suspension of benefits for up to 867 hours per school year, provided that the retired teacher reenters employment more than one calendar month after his or her accrual date and after the effective date of this section, is employed exclusively as a substitute teacher, and the employing district compensates the district's substitute teachers at a rate that is at least 85 percent of the full daily state rate.

School districts must report to OSPI, and OSPI must post on its website, the number of substitute teachers hired per school year, the number hired under the above postretirement provision, the full daily compensation rate per substitute teacher, and the reason for hiring the substitute teacher.

Expansion of Alternative Route Programs. Subject to a specific appropriation, PESB must convene meetings between school districts that do not have alternative route programs and the nearest PESB-approved teacher preparation program to determine whether the districts and institutions can partner to operate an alternative route program.

Subject to a specific appropriation, public institutions with PESB-approved teacher preparation programs that do not have an alternative route program must submit proposals to PESB to offer such programs by September 1, 2016. If approved, the institutions must implement an alternative route program according to a timeline suggested by the PESB.

By July 1, 2018, institutions of higher education with an alternative route program must develop a plan describing how the institution will partner with school districts in the general geographic region of the school, or where its programs are offered, regarding placement of resident teachers. The plans must be developed in collaboration with districts desiring to partner with the institutions, and may include use of unexpended federal or state funds to support residencies and mentoring for students who are likely to continue teaching in the district in which they have a supervised student teaching residency. The plans must be updated at least biennially.

Mentoring Teachers. A mentor is an educator who has achieved appropriate training in assisting, coaching, and advising beginning teachers or student teaching residents as defined by OSPI, such as a national board certification or other specialized training.

Candidates in alternative route programs are offered support through the BEST program. Funds are prioritized to school districts with a large influx of beginning teachers. The BEST program must have a goal to provide beginning teachers from underrepresented populations with a mentor who has strong ties to underrepresented populations. OSPI must notify districts about the BEST program and encourage them to apply for program funds.

In fiscal year 2017, OSPI must collaborate with PESB and PESB-approved teacher preparation programs to develop mentor training program goals and make the mentor training goals available on its website. Once developed, OSPI is encouraged to use the mentorship training goals to develop professional development curricula.

Conditional Scholarship Programs. Elementary and early childhood endorsements are added to the list of endorsements eligible for the Educator Retooling Conditional Scholarship. Bilingual education, elementary education, computer science education, and early childhood education are added to the list of qualifying endorsements for the purposes of the Pipeline for Paraeducators Conditional Scholarship.

Teacher Hiring Reports. By June 15th of each year, school districts must report to OSPI the number of classroom teachers hired in the previous school year, and the number of teachers the district projects will be hired in the following school year. The report must be disaggregated by content area.

Teacher Shortage Conditional Grant. Subject to a specific appropriation, the Teacher Shortage Conditional Grant program is established within the Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program. The purpose of the program is to encourage individuals to become teachers by providing financial aid to individuals enrolled in professional educator standards-approved teacher preparation programs. The WSAC must develop and adopt rules to administer the program.

As part of its rule-making process, WSAC must collaborate with PESB, the Washington State School Directors' Association, and PESB-approved teacher preparation programs to develop a framework for the conditional grant program, including eligibility requirements, contractual obligations, conditional grant amounts, and loan repayment requirements.

In developing the eligibility requirements, WSAC must consider: whether the individual has a financial need, is a first-generation college student, or is from a traditionally underrepresented group among teachers in Washington; whether the individual is completing an alternative route program; whether the individual plans to obtain an endorsement in subject shortage area; the characteristic of any geographic shortage area that the individual plans to teach in; and whether a school district has committed to offering the individual employment once the individual obtains a Residency Certificate.

In developing the contractual obligations, WSAC must consider requiring the individual to: obtain a Residency Certificate; teach in an endorsement shortage area; and commit to teach for five school years in an approved education program with a need for a teacher with such an endorsement at the time of hire.

In developing the conditional grant award amounts, WSAC must consider whether the individual is: enrolled in a public or private institution of higher education; a resident; in a baccalaureate or post-baccalaureate program; or in an alternative route program. In addition, the award amounts must not result in a reduction of the individual's federal or state grant aid, including Pell Grants, State Need Grants, College Bound Scholarships, or Opportunity Scholarships.

In developing the repayment requirements for a conditional grant that is converted into a loan, the terms and conditions of the loan must follow the interest rate and repayment terms of the federal Direct Subsidized Loan program. In addition, WSAC must consider the following repayment schedule, including interest and an equalization fee:

- 85 percent of the conditional amount if less than one school year of teaching is completed;
- 75 percent of the conditional amount if less than two school years of teaching are completed;
- 55 percent of the conditional amount if less than three school years of teaching are completed; and
- 40 percent of the conditional amount if less than four school years of teaching are completed.

By November 1, 2018, and November 1, 2020, WSAC must submit reports to the Legislature that recommend whether the conditional grant program should be continued, modified, or terminated, and that include information about the recipients of the grants under this program.

Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help (TEACH) Pilot Project. The Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help (TEACH) pilot project is created to develop an expandable program that provides grants to teachers taking basic skills and content tests for teacher certification. The creation of the program is dependent upon funds being specifically appropriated by the Legislature for its establishment, and authorization for the project expires June 30, 2021.

WSAC, after consultation with the PESB, is charged with developing and adopting rules by August 1, 2016 to administer the TEACH pilot project. The rules must satisfy specified requirements including establishing grant application and financial need verification processes. To qualify for financial assistance under the TEACH pilot project, an applicant must:

- be enrolled in, have applied to, or have completed a PESB-approved teacher preparation program;
- show a financial need, as demonstrated by the student's eligibility to receive the State Need Grant; and
- register for an endorsement competency test in endorsement shortage areas.

Grant funds awarded under the TEACH pilot project must be awarded beginning September 1, 2016, to cover the costs of basic skills and content tests required for teacher certification. In awarding funds, the WASC must prioritize grant awards first, to applicants registered for competency tests in endorsement shortage areas and second, to applicants with the greatest financial need. The WASC is required to scale the number of TEACH pilot project grant awards to the amount of appropriated funds.

WSAC, in collaboration with PESB, must submit a preliminary report to the Legislature by December 31, 2018, that details the effectiveness and costs of the TEACH pilot project. The preliminary report must comply with specific requirements, including comparing the numbers and demographic information of students taking and passing tests in the endorsement shortage areas before and after implementation of the TEACH pilot project. A final report that details the effectiveness and costs of the TEACH pilot project and includes a recommendation as to whether the pilot project should be modified, continued, or expanded is due to the Legislature by December 31, 2020.

Residency Grant. Subject to a specific appropriation, WSAC must administer a Student Teaching Residency Grant program to provide additional funds to individuals completing residencies at public schools in Washington. To qualify for the grant, recipients must be enrolled in a PESB-approved teacher preparation program, be completing or about to start a student teaching residency at a Title I school, and demonstrate financial need as defined by WSAC and consistent with the income criteria required to receive the State Need Grant.

Tuition Waivers. Public four-year and two-year institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of the tuition and services and activities fees for public school K–12 classified staff when their coursework is relevant to their work assignment.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	45	4	
House	76	21	(House amended)
House	96	2	(House amended)
Senate	49	0	

Effective: 90 Days.